Department of Music

University of Alberta

presents

NEW MUSIC

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A concert of new Canadian Music in honour of

CANADA MUSIC WEEK

Sunday, Nov. 17, 1985 at 8:00 p.m.
Convocation Hall, Old Arts Building

PROGRAM

Epigrams — Violet Archer (b. 1913)

If the Man Who Turnips Cries
My Bishop's Eyes
Lord Clive*
This House Where Once a Lawyer Dwelt
I Like to Quote
The Bee Hive Inn

*Text by William C. Bentley, used with permission of Curtis Brown, London, England

David Astor, tenor
Alexandra Munn, piano

Extensions (1985) (Premiere performance) — George Arasimowicz (b. 1954)

Bill Damur, flute
Garth Hobden, George Arasimowicz, electronics

An die Musik II — John Armstrong (b. 1952)

Antemusic
Viola
An die Musik
Syrinx
Antimusic

Elsie Hepburn, soprano
John Armstrong, guitar

In Darkness (1985) (Premiere performance) — Alfred Fisher (b. 1942)

I Rhyme: Carefree, buoyant
II Conundrum: Impetuously, freely
III Feux Follets: Fast, light
IV Pierce Pond, June 25, 1956: Slow, serene, very freely
V Badinage: Bright, energetic
VI From whence: Slowly, tenderly

Mark Eeles, violoncello

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INTERMISSION

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Miniatures from the Chinese* — Violet Archer

Majestic Valley
Listening-to-the-Rain-Studio
Spring Thoughts
Pine Wind Terrace
West Cliff

*Texts by Chu Yi-Tsun (1629-1709), translated by Chang Yin-nan, Lewis Walmsley, Irving Y. Lo, used with permission of Doubleday and Co., Inc.

David Astor, tenor
Alexandra Munn, piano

Two Gentil Knyghtes (1979) — Malcolm Forsyth (b. 1936)

1. Tucket
2. Sir Jeffrey, His Jest
3. L'après midi d'un Hippo (Tempo di Stripper)
4. Sir Roger, His Ricercar

Christopher Taylor, bass trombone
Scott Whetham, tuba

Two Last Words* (1985) — Alfred Fisher

Seeds
Strange How When We Walk

*Texts by Wendy Martin

Elsie Hepburn, soprano
Jane O'Dea, piano

PROGRAM NOTES

VIOLET ARCHER

One of Canada's most acclaimed composers, Violet Archer's honours include a citation from the Yale School of Music, a Merit Award from the Government of Alberta, the Queen's Jubilee Silver Medal and Honorary Doctorate from McGill University, and the P.R.O. Canada award for outstanding success in the field of concert music. In 1984, she was chosen "Composer of the Year" by the Canadian Music Council. Recently, in Edmonton, her music has been the subject of a three-day "Violet Archer Festival" and a city park has been named in her honour. Her works have been performed in Canada, the United States, Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Israel, Russia, Japan, New Zealand, Chile, Ireland, Australia and Spain.

Epigrams is a short cycle on four-line poems of a satirical nature. The composer has sought, in each setting, to project the individual shade of humour expressed in each poem. In Miniatures from the Chinese, the composer has attempted to capture the contemplative quality of each poem, each of which, in her own words, is like "a delicate Chinese painting." The intensity of instrumental and vocal colour increases throughout the cycle, climaxing in the sonic brilliance of the final song, "West Cliff."

GEORGE ARASIMOWICZ

George Arasimowicz was born in Ottawa in 1954. He studied at the University of Toronto (A.R.C.T., B.Mus.), Carleton University (Hon. B.A. in English and History), McGill University (M.A.), and the University of California, San Diego (Ph.D.). In 1978-79 he was the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada award holder to Poland where he studied at the State Academy of Music, Warsaw and worked in the experimental studio of the Polish Radio. His principal composition teachers have been Wlodzimierz Kotoński, Bernard Rands, Roger Reynolds, and Joji Yuasa. In addition to orchestral, chamber, choral, and tape music, Dr. Arasimowicz has composed scores for film, television and theater.

Extensions (1985) for electronic flute invokes several orders of virtuosity which extend the range of solo flute performance. The flautist must utilize a wide range of tone production; mediate between appositions of moods; and respond to, as well as introduce, live signal processing which is controlled by the composer. The resultant interaction approaches a type of monadic ensemble.

JOHN ARMSTRONG

Born in Toronto in 1952, John Armstrong has studied at the University of Toronto (Mus. Bac.), the University of Michigan (M.M., D.M.A.), and the École d'arts américains. His teachers include Leslie Bassett, George Wilson, William Bolcom and Nadia Boulanger. He is the recipient of prizes from both the Sir Ernest MacMillan and William St. Clair Lowe Competitions

JOHN ARMSTRONG (CONTINUED)

sponsored by CAPAC and has received a number of commissions through the Ontario Arts Council. His works have been performed in Canada, France and the United States as well as broadcast on C.B.C. Radio.

An die Musik II was written in 1985 for Eleanor Gang and Andrew MacDonald. Setting his own texts along with Shakespeare's "If music be the food of love . . .," from Twelfth Night, he deals with the problematic question: "What should serious music be like in 1985? Should it be profound and elusive or should it be accessible and entertaining?"

The central song is a humorous lecture on the subject of the composer's relationship to both the entertainment world and to the great masters of the past, as exemplified by Mozart. Songs II and IV are straightforward settings which depict music and composition as entirely sensual, "non-intellectual" experiences. Song I is, in terms of pitch and phonetics, the retrograde of song V, which, itself, inverts the original meaning of the Shakespeare text by depicting love as a metaphor for music rather than music as a metaphor for love.

Should serious music be profound or should it be entertaining? The answer is an unequivocal yes!

ALFRED FISHER

One of Canada's most serious and most eloquent composers, Alfred Fisher holds degrees from Boston University (B. Mus.) and Michigan State University (M. Mus., Ph.D.) in Music History, Performance and Composition. His teachers have included David Burge, George Crumb, Douglas Moore and Owen Reed. His distinguished record as a composer includes commissions from Radio Telefis Eireann, Wayne State University, The International Suzuki Association, the C.B.C., the Canada Council, the Canadian Music Centre and others. His works have been performed and broadcast throughout Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and in Europe.

Of the works presented on tonight's program, the composer states: "Neither of these two short works was commissioned. The immediate motivation for the composition of In Darkness was the sound of the 'cello--yes, the old convention about the 'cello's 'richness and warmth' etc. Although much recent writing for the 'cello (including some of my own) has made it abundantly clear that it can do other things, I continue to value the 'cello as the old friend it is for me and to write music that engages the centre of its strengths. The movement titles are not critical for an understanding of the music, but they are not without meaning. Pierce Pond is a real (and obviously unforgettable) place. From Whence must be read as a tender declaration. It is not a question.

ALFRED FISHER (CONTINUED)

Wendy Martin's poetry interested me because of its fine blending of assertiveness and poignancy and because of its musicality. The interest for the composer in setting such a text--the creation of a musical environment that sustains and expands without blunting its own independent musical existence--is one of the constants in the history of music. For composers who love and respect words, it has always implied the perhaps more subtle challenge of shaping a response to the 'musical dimension' of poetry that is no less elusively or tellingly poetical."

MALCOLM FORSYTH

Born in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, Forsyth received his musical training at the University of Cape Town before settling in Canada in 1968; since then he has been a faculty member of the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

It is as a composer that he is best known, and his works for orchestra (including three symphonies) and for brass and woodwind ensemble have been widely performed in many countries, and on five continents. Frequent broadcasts of his music have been made on C.B.C., by artists such as Maureen Forrester, the Canadian Brass, and Helmut Brauss (for whom he wrote his acclaimed Concerto for Piano and Orchestra).

Many soloists and ensembles, both Canadian and foreign, continue to commission works from him, some of which are now available on recordings; for example "Sagittarius", The Golyardes' Grounde, and Quartet '74.

Lately he has completed three new works for orchestra, viz. Atayoskewin, Canzona for voice and orchestra, and Sun Songs, also for voice and orchestra.

His style, while evincing traits of many different influences, including western tonality, atonality, African tribal music and jazz, continues to grow in a quite personal way and generally shows great concern for both the performer and listener, in contrast to much of the post-50's avant garde.

Regarding Two Gentil Knyghtes, the composer writes:

"Los Angeles Philharmonic members Jeffrey Reynolds and Roger Bobo requested this piece to provide a vehicle where a black hole had previously existed. 'There's no such thing,' commented LSO tuba player John Fletcher when the composer told him of this latest addition to the world's bizarrerie.

A Tucket is a fanfare, or toccata, if we are to believe Shakespeare,

MALCOLM FORSYTH (CONTINUED)

who cues several of them into his plays.

The Jest is a virtuosic gallop in twelve-eight time (a highly suitable jousting time, according to the composer, who has only seen jousting in 1950's movies like Ivanhoe).

Debussy inspires the hippo of the 3rd movement to produce multiphonic (simultaneous singing and playing) and muted effects as a prelude to disrobing in the Tempo di Stripper (twelve-eight again, but dirty).

A ricercar is a contrapuntal imitative musical form of the 17th and 18th centuries. This one is in seven-eight.

Gentil Knyghtes were 14th century noblemen, much mentioned by Chaucer, who presumably wore armour much of the time, a fact which inspired this composer to entitle this piece as he did (what with the two performers toting all that heavy metal around all the time, but in truth many bass trombonists and tubists he has dealt with seem to lack some of the nobility implied, as he, a trombonist, does himself)."

TEXTS

AN DIE MUSIK II

I ("Antemusic") and V ("Antimusic")

If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it: that surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! it had a dying fall:
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour. Enough, no more!
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy,
That it alone is high fantastical.

William Shakespeare

II ("Viola")

Viola--
Even the name must be savoured,
spoken slowly with long vowels and soft consonances.

Sculpted from dark wood,
shaped with hot irons into warm curves,
her music beckons with a siren's trill-
each listener drawn to his own
entrancement.

III ("An die Musik")

What's the difference between art
and spectator sport?
In both, the audience expresses itself
vicariously.

Hearing a symphony can be as wonderful as writing one--
depending, of course, on the listener
and the composer,
for example--me
and Mozart.

Why is it that every time I write a piece,
Mozart--now dead almost 200 years--
improves more than I do?

IV ("Syrinx")

Whispering softly
with dreadful nuance,
the ruby-low notes seduce,
caressing gently as they fall.

This is the sound of love--
first coy,
then sure,
then glorious.
Nimble and confident it rises,
higher and higher,
to climax in glittering argent.

Silver rings shimmering in the air,
then fades to yet another
exquisite
silence.

TWO LAST WORDS

Seeds

empty bird tray lurches in crazed wind
seeds hurled to cold infertile ground
within the hanging lamp rocks to and fro

I phone again but you are gone

oh these impermanent birds
migrating to and fro
their mates fleeting as seasons

will you not return my solitary seed
before these sterile days become our season's end

Strange how when we walk

strange how when we walk together in boots
or two in shoes our strides alike

but you in boots and me in shoes
no longer on the same footing
we lose our step

and stride apart

CBC Stereo Edmonton 90.9

The entire program this evening is being recorded by CBC. Portions of the concert will be heard on various programs including:

THAT TIME OF THE NIGHT
November 24, 1985, 8:08 P.M.
CBC Stereo 90.9

SUNDAY ARTS - TBA
Sundays, 6:00 to 8:30 A.M.
CBC Radio 740

TWO NEW HOURS - TBA
Sundays, 9:00 P.M.
CBC Stereo 90.9

CBC Stereo provides a variety of musical programs that regularly features Alberta musicians:

THAT TIME OF THE NIGHT, Sunday, 8:08 P.M.
MOSTLY MUSIC, daily, 9:05 A.M.
ARTS NATIONAL, nightly, 8:00 P.M.
ORGANISTS IN RECITAL, Sunday, 4:30 P.M.
TWO NEW HOURS, Sunday, 9:00 P.M.
CHORAL CONCERT, Sunday, 8:00 A.M.
COMMAND PERFORMANCE, Sunday 2:00 P.M.

and on CBC Radio
SUNDAY ARTS, Sunday, 6:00 A.M.